

"Oh, no; not now. I was going to

take you direct to my room. Now

we are going to a hotel with all the

publicity we can get. Here we are."

lumbering coach, and were whirling

over the rough pavement, through a

confusing maze of streets, past long

rows of dingy, ugly buildings, to the

"A room for the night," ordered

"Your brother will sleep with you?"

Henry paid the bill, took the key,

and we were shown to our room. Af-

ter removing the travel-stains, I de-

Henry, tossing the key on the bu-

reau as we left. "Or no, on second

thought," he continued, "it's just as

well to leave the door tocked. There

might be some inquisitive callers."

And we betook ourselves to a hasty

meal that was not of a nature to

"Are you through?" asked my com-

panion, as I shook my head over a

melancholy piece of pie, and laid down

my fork. "Well, take your bag. This

door-look pleasant and say nothing."

He led the way to the bar and then

through a back room or two, until

with a turn we were in a blind alley.

After a pause to observe the street

before we ventured forth, Henry

"I guess we're all right now. We

must chance it, anyhow." So we

dodged along in the shadow till we

came to Montgomery Street, and after

a brief walk, turned into a gloomy

doorway and mounted a worn pair of

The house was three stories in

height. It stood on the corner of an

alley, and the lower floor was in-

tended for a store or saloon; but a

renting agent's sign and a collection

of old show-bills ornamenting the

dirty windows testified that it was

"This isn't just the place I'd choose

with a visible relief from his uneasi-

"Oh, that's all right," I said, mag-

"It doesn't have all the modern con-

veniences," admitted Henry as we

stumbled up the second flight, "but

it's suitable to the business we have

"What's that?" I exclaimed, as a

We stopped and listened, peering

"It must have been outside," said

The room was at the rear corner

Henry, and opened the door of the

of the building. There were two win-

dows, one looking to the west, the

other to the north and opening on the

"Not so bad after you get in," said

"It's luxury after six days of rail-

"Well, lie down there, and make

the most of it, then," he said, "for

there may be trouble ahead." And he

listened again at the crack of the

"In Heaven's name, Henry, what's

up?" I exclaimed with some temper.

'You're as full of mysteries as a

"Maybe you don't recognize that

I was about to protest that I could

not know too much, when Henry

raised his hand with a warning to si-

lence. I heard the sound of a cau

tious step outside. Then Henry

sprang to the door, flung it open, and

bolted down the passage. There was

the gleam of a revolver in his hand

I hurried after him, but as I crossed

the threshold he was coming softly

"I must see to the guards again. I

"Can I help?"
"No. Just wait here till I get back

can have them together by midnight,"

back, with finger on his lips.

this is serious business," he said.

narrow alley.

as an apology.

dime novel."

Henry smiled grimly.

roading," I replied.

last room on the right of the hall.

creaking, rasping sound came from

nanimously accepting his apology.

dirty stair.

in hand, and-"

the hall below.

into obscurity beneath.

raise my opinion of San Francisco.

"We won't need this again," said

clared myself quite ready to dine.

Henry, as we entered the hotel of-

fice and saluted the clerk.

inquired the clerk.

In another moment we were in a

CHAPTER I.

A Dangerous Errand. A city of hills with a fringe of houses crowning the lower heights; half-mountains rising bare in the background and becoming real mountains as they stretched away in the distance to right and left; a confused mass of buildings coming to the water's edge on the flat; a forest of masts, ships swinging in the stream, and the streaked, yellow, gray-green water of the bay taking a cold light from the setting sun as it struggled through the wisps of fog that fluttered above the serrated sky-line of the city-these were my first impressions of San Francisco.

The wind blew fresh and chill from the west with the damp and salt of the Pacific heavy upon it, as I breasted it from the forward deck of the ferry steamer, El Capitan. As I drank in the air and was oilent with admiration of the beautiful panorama that was spread before me, my companion touched me on the arm.

"Come into my cabin," he said. "You'll be one of those fellows who can't come to San Francisco without catching his death of cold, and then lays it on to the climate instead of his own lack of common sense. Come, I can't spare you, now I've got you here at last. I wouldn't lose you for a million dollars."

"I'll come for half the money," I returned, as he took me by the arm and led me into the close cabin.

My companion, I should explain, was Henry Wilton, the son of my father's cousin, who had the advantages of a few years of residence in-California, and sported all the airs of a pieneer. We had been close friends through boyhood and youth, and it was on his offer of employment that I had come to the city by the Golden Gate.

"What a resemblance!" I heard a woman exclaim, as we entered the cabin. "They must be twins."

"There, Henry," I whispered with a laugh; "you see we are discovered." Though our relationship was not close we had been cast in the mold of some common ancestor. We were so nearly alike in form and feature as to perplex all but our intimate acquaintances, and we had made the resemblance the occasion of many tricks in our boyhood days.

Henry had heard the exclamation as well as I. To my surprise, it appeared to bring him annoyance or apprehension rather than amusement.

"I had forgotten that it would make us conspicuous," he said, more to himself than to me, I thought; and he glanced through the cabin as though he looked for some peril.

"We were used to that long ago," I said, as we found a seat. "Is the business ready for me? You wrote that you thought it would be in hand by the time I got here."

"We can't talk about it here," he said in a low tone. "There is plenty of work to be done. It's not hard, but, as I wrote you, it needs a man of pluck and discretion. It's delicate business, you understand, and dangerous if you can't keep your head. But the danger won't be yours. I've got that end of it."

"Of course you're not trying to do anything against the law?" I said. "Oh, it has nothing to do with the law," he replied with an odd smile.

"In fact, it's a little matter in which we are-well, you might say-outside I gave a gasp at this distressing

suggestion, and Henry chuckled as he saw the consternation written on my

face. Then he rose and said: "Come, the boat is getting in." "But I want to know-" I began.

"Oh, bother your 'want-to-knows.' It's not against the law- just outside it, you understand. I'll tell you more of it when we get to my room. Give me that valise. Come along now." And as the boat entered the slip we found ourselves at the front of the pressing crowd that is always surging in and out of San Francisco by the gateway of the Market Street ferry.

As we pushed our way through the clamoring hack-drivers and hotel-runners who blocked the entrance to the city, I was roused by a sudden thrill of the instinct of danger that warns one when he meets the eye of a snake. It was gone in an instant, but I had time to trace effect to cause. The warning came this time from the eyes of a man, a lithe, keen-faced man who flashed a look of triumphant malice on us as he disappeared in the waiting-room of the ferry-shed. But the keen face and the basilisk glance were burned into my mind in that moment as deeply as though I had known then what evil was behind

My companion swore softly to him-

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Don't look around," he said. "We

are watched." "The snake-eyed man?"

"Did you see him, too?" His manner was careless, but his tone was troubled. "I thought I had given him the slip," he continued. "Well, there's no help for it now."

"Are we to hunt for a hiding-place?"
I asked doubtfully.

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me. It isn't likely that they will try to do anything before midnight. If they do-well, here's a revolver. Shoot through the door if anybody tries to break it down."

I stood in the door, revolver in hand, watched him down the hall, and listened to his footsteps as they descended the stairs and at last faded away into the murmur of life that came up from the open street.

> CHAPTER II. A Cry for Help.

I hastily closed and locked the door. Then I rallied my spirits with something of resolution, and shamed myself with the reproach that I should fear to share any danger that Henry was ready to face. Wearied as I was with travel, I was too much excited for sleep. Reading was equally impossible. I scarcely glanced at the shelf of books that hung on the wall, and turned to a study of my surround-

The room was on the corner, as I have said, and I threw up the sash of the west window and looked out over a tangle of old buildings, ramshackle sheds, and an alley that appeared to lead nowhere.

Some sound of a drunken quarrel drew my attention to the north window, and I looked out into the alley. There were shouts and curses, and protesting, struggling inebriate was hurled out from the front door and left, with threats and foul language, to collect himself from the pavement.

This edifying incident, which was explained to me solely by sound, had scarcely come to an end when a noise of creaking boards drew my eyes to for entertaining friends," said Henry, the other window. The shutter suddenly flew around, and a human figure as we climbed the worn and swung in at the open casing

> "S-h-h!" came the warning whisper, and I recognized my supposed robber. It was Henry.

"Don't speak out loud," he said in suppressed tones. "Wait till I fasten this shutter." "Shall I shut the window?" I asked,

thoroughly impressed by his manner. "No. you'll make too much noise." he said, stripping off his coat and vest. "Here, change clothes with me. Quick! It's a case of life and death. I must be out of here in two minutes. Do as I say, now. Don't ask questions. I'll tell you about it in a day or two. No, just the coat and vest. There-give me that collar and tie. Where's your hat?"

The changes were completed, or rather his were, and he stood looking as much like me as could be imag-

"Don't stir from this room till I come back," he whispered. "You can dress in anything of mine you like. I'll be in before twelve, or send a messenger if I'm not coming. By-by."

He was gone before I could say a word, and only an occasional creaking board told me of his progress down the stairs. He had evidently had some practice in getting about quietly. I could only wonder, as I closed and locked the door, whether it was the police or a private enemy that he was trying to avoid.

I had small time to speculate on the possibilities, for outside the window I heard the single word, "Help!" I rushed to the window and looked out. A band of half a dozen men was struggling and pushing away from Montgomery Street into the darker end of the alley. They were nearly under the window.

"Give it to him," said a voice. In an instant there came a scream of agony. Then a light showed and Henry, half as an introduction, half a tall, broad-shouldered figure leaped back.

> "These aren't the papers," it hissed. "Curse you, you've got the wrong

> > .To be continued.

Gloomy View of Mankind. "I may be kind o' harsh in my judg ment of men," observed Uncle Jerry Peebles, "but I've noticed, as a general thing, that a man ain't any better than his hat."

THE EXPLANATION.

"No wonder graveyards are haunted," said the home grown philosopher.

"What's the explanation?" queried the party of the other part. "After a man has been kicked and

cuffed all his life, it's only natural that his ghost would enjoy a quiet sitdown in the moonlight occasionally for the purpose of reading his epitaph," answered the philosophical Boit the door, and let nobody in but person.

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2-Why pump and carry water for your kitchen and laundry work when you can have it at hand for the turning of a faucet?

3-Why take chances on drinking germ-filled cistern water when you can get it from a large reservoir filtered through the best filter plant South of the Ohio River?

4-Why have a dry, dismallooking yard when you can have it filled with green grass and blooming flowers, and can at the same time get rid of the dust in the street?

5-Why suffer other inconveniences when you can have everything for the comfort and health of your family right in the house?

6-Is it not true that the answer is not "lack of money," but lack of economy and enterprise and indifference to getting the most out of life?

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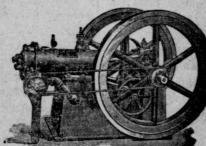
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